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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 December 1956

SUBJECT: SNIE 100-2-56: ENEMY CAPABILITIES TO MISLEAD THE US
(Draft for Board Consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the ability of US intelligence to cope with enemy attempts to mislead and misinform in a manner or on a scale which would threaten US national security.

SCOPE

This estimate, which differs radically from the normal national intelligence estimate, owes its origin to a recommendation made by the Killian Committee and NSC Action 1430. Specific recommendation C.4. of the Killian Report reads as follows:

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"We need to examine intelligence data more broadly, or to invent some new technique, for the discovery of hoaxes. As a first step, we recommend a National Intelligence Estimate, with adequate safeguards, of our success in keeping secret our most useful techniques of intelligence. This estimate would suggest the extent to which an enemy might be manipulating the information obtained through these sources."

DISCUSSION

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Definitions and Distinctions

1. Deception, or hoax, as used in this paper, is defined as the act of misleading through deliberate manipulation, distortion or falsification of evidence. Generally speaking, the methods are as follows: (a) by planting false information; (b) by coloring or distorting otherwise authentic information so as to make it convey a false impression; (c) by selectively releasing some correct

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information on a subject while withholding essential parts of the total picture; and (d) by releasing plentiful data, whether true or false, with the object of overshadowing and obscuring certain particular items of paramount importance. These various methods may be pursued in combination or singly.

2. For the purposes of this paper, deception must be distinguished from concealment. The latter aims by withholding information to prevent the victim from arriving at a true conclusion; the former aims by manipulating information to make him arrive at a false conclusion. Concealment is intended to foster ignorance, and deception to produce error, and it is with deception that this paper is primarily concerned.

3. The distinction between concealment and deception is theoretically valid, but in practice it is often futile and sometimes impossible to separate the two. Deception generally -- though not always -- depends for success upon an accompanying suppression of truth. Concealment in turn is often made more certain by an accompanying deception intended to distract attention from the truth. The two thus go generally together. (primarily concerned with the data we have, not with that we do not have, we are) In this paper, however, we are examining not the extent of our ignorance of Soviet affairs, nor the capabilities of Soviet security agencies to

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withhold information, but rather the extent to which our ^{evidence concerning} ~~estimates of~~ Soviet affairs may be ^{the product of} ~~vitiating~~ by deliberate Soviet deception. Accordingly we shall as far as possible exclude the element of concealment from the discussion, while recognizing nevertheless that it is usually an essential component of successful deception.

Objectives of Soviet Deception

4. Broadly speaking, Soviet hoaxes undertaken against US and allied intelligence would have one of three aims:

(a) To lead us to an underestimate of Soviet or Bloc strength and determination, either in some particular respect (e.g. heavy bomber strength; Soviet disposition to support Communist China), or generally. Such an underestimate could be profitable to the Bloc by causing the US and its allies to cut down on the development of countervailing strength, and then to find themselves confronted by superior Bloc power at a time of crisis. At worst it might lead to defeat of the US and its allies in war, because of inadequate preparation.

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(b) To lead us to an overestimate of Soviet or Bloc strength and determination, either in some particular respect, or generally. Such an overestimate could be profitable to the Bloc by creating unnecessary economic and political strains as the US and its allies strove to build up counter-vailing power. It could also produce excessive caution in the US and its allies, causing them to accept reverses, or to fail to press advantages and achieve successes, when the true power situation made such courses unnecessary.

(c) To cover (i.e. to assist in the concealment of) some particular Bloc operation, or some aspect of Bloc policy, by directing the attention of US and allied intelligence to other matters.

5. Any Soviet deception must logically be directed towards one or another of these goals. In practice, however, more modest aims might in certain circumstances be all that the Soviet leaders needed or wanted to achieve. Suppose, for example, a period of intense international crisis, with war an imminent possibility. The problems and uncertainties facing intelligence officers would be very great, and

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large amounts of contradictory data would be flowing in even in the absence of deliberate deception. At such a time hoaxes which fell short of being wholly convincing would nevertheless serve to puzzle and distract the activities of intelligence. Such hoaxes might accomplish their purpose if they prevented estimates from being timely and firm, even though they did not succeed in causing them to be incorrect. Thus, although the logical aim of deception will always be to induce a false estimate, the practical aim may be simply to hinder and delay the production of a correct estimate, and to cause it to be attended with doubts and reservations.

Soviet Capabilities for Deception

6. Soviet capabilities for deception depend in great part upon the degree to which various US intelligence methods are susceptible to hoax; this problem is discussed at length in Part II of this paper. Here it is only necessary to point out that since the Soviet state is totalitarian, its rulers can exert an unusually high degree of control over the information respecting their country which becomes available to the outside world. Publications, speeches, broadcasts, and the like, can be directly controlled. Statistics and other descriptions of Soviet life and achievement can be systematically falsified. Observers can be shown

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what the Soviet government wishes them to see, and excluded from what the government wishes them not to see. Moreover, Soviet rulers are not answerable to their own public for what they do in this connection. They can decree any feasible operations of deception they wish, almost regardless of cost, and they need not worry if their own general public is puzzled or misled by hoaxes primarily intended to deceive foreigners. Thus the basic capabilities of the Soviet government for deception are greater than those of any other important government in the modern world.

6a. It may be observed, nevertheless, that totalitarian controls are not an unmitigated advantage to a government seeking to deceive. The foreign observer of the USSR may not know whether the information he gets is true or false, but at least he knows that on the whole it is what the Soviet government wants him to get. The intelligence officer, however he gets his information, knows that nothing of consequence is said or done in the USSR without the sanction of government. It is possible that the Soviet regime might weaken, and that as a ^{result} ~~consequence~~ unauthorized things would happen in the state. As long as the regime is strong, however, it must forego the advantage democratic states enjoy (whether they wish it or not) of confusing foreign intelligence with vast masses of uncoordinated data, correct and incorrect, authorized and unauthorized, valuable and worthless.

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Defenses against Deception

6b. Intelligence officers are aware of the possibility that they may be the recipients of information intended to deceive. Each piece of data concerning the Sino-Soviet Bloc is examined with a particularly critical and skeptical eye by US and allied intelligence personnel, to ascertain, if possible, whether it has been deliberately distorted. In the more technical branches of intelligence research, investigation is constantly in progress to discover the possibilities of deception, to devise methods for defeating them, and to invent new methods of intelligence collecting which may, for a time at least, be relatively immune from hoax. It is clear that the best defense against deception would be to acquire information respecting the Soviet Bloc by methods which the Soviets did not know about, and which consequently they could not use to introduce deceptive data. Generally speaking, however, this defense is not available.

7. The US has no method of intelligence collection or analysis which is wholly unknown to the Bloc, nor any method which is entirely free from susceptibility to hoax. This is not to say that all methods are equally untrustworthy on these grounds; in some circumstances photographs, for example, or the direct observation of competent witnesses,

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may furnish data which is for all practical purposes incontrovertible. Neither is it true that the Bloc is always aware of the extent to which the US employs each of its various intelligence methods, or of their application to particular problems, or of the success with which they are used, or of the degree of advancement which a particular technique has reached. When a technique is very new, or is newly applied in some particular area of intelligence interest, there may for a time be good reason to believe that its use is unknown to the Bloc, and the data which it produces may be received with substantial confidence that they do not form part of an operation of deception. As a general rule, however, we consider it impossible to find assurance against deception through intelligence methods unknown to the Bloc.

7a. While no method of intelligence collection can be proved to be invariably free from susceptibility to hoax, nearly all methods will frequently produce particular data which can be demonstrated to be hoax-free. One sure defense against deception would be for the intelligence community to use nothing but such data, but the result would be an extremely limited view of Bloc affairs, quite inadequate for the needs of policy-makers. Accordingly, it is necessary to fall back on large amounts of information which, taken bit by bit, cannot be certified as

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hoax-free. This would be a serious weakness if each piece of data existed only in isolation from others, but obviously such is not the case. Intelligence estimates very rarely rest on isolated bits of data. On the contrary, practically all are based upon a substantial mass of information, the various parts of which tend to support one another and to provide an elaborate structure of evidence which is internally consistent and mutually confirmatory.

7b. There is no need to review here the well-established rules for the use of evidence. Strictly in relation to the problem of deception, however, two modes of confirmatory procedure may be mentioned:

(a) Any piece of data may be considered hoax-free if it is clearly and specifically confirmed by other data which can be proved hoax-free. The former may then itself be used to confirm additional items, and so on through a chain of confirmation -- which must of course be constructed with caution;

(b) If substantial amounts of data fit together into a consistent whole, a presumption may thereby be established that the data is hoax-free, even though no single piece of it, taken by itself, can be proved to be so. As observed above, however, the capabilities of the Soviet government are such that large masses

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of internally consistent but actually deceptive data might be disseminated for the benefit of foreign intelligence. Hence the presumption of freedom from hoax must be carefully considered. The strength of this presumption will depend upon (1) what proportion of the evidence can be shown to belong almost certainly in the hoax-free class; and (2) how feasible a hoax actually would be in the particular situation and with the particular data under consideration.

8. The data bearing on each estimative problem is different, and hence the degree of defense against deception is different in every estimate. In general, however, estimates relating to the more ordinary aspects of Soviet life -- the economic system, for example, and much of the conventional military establishment -- are based upon a great deal of data from many independent sources. Confirmatory evidence is plentiful, if not always sufficient. Moreover, the feasibility of deception is at its lowest when the false data to be fabricated is voluminous and the correct data to be concealed equally so; when deception would have to involve very large numbers of Soviet officials, and might seriously mislead those who were not admitted to the secret. On the other hand, in certain specialized and highly secure aspects of Soviet activity -- the

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guided missile and nuclear weapons programs for example -- information on some of the most important points is scanty and there is rarely much directly confirmatory evidence. In these situations it becomes of the utmost importance to secure data which is inherently hoax-free, and which does not require confirmatory evidence to argue that it is so.

9. Over the general field of intelligence work, therefore, the principal defense against deception lies in continual and laborious acquisition of plentiful data from independent and (if possible) widely distributed sources. By this means a new piece of information may frequently be clearly confirmed, and pronounced hoax-free. If such specific confirmation is impossible, new information may nevertheless be accepted as substantially true if it fits reasonably well into the context in which it belongs, and if that context is itself fairly well established. Painstaking research into the whole structure and pattern of Communist society is essential for the purpose of establishing such a context and permitting the testing of new bits of information as they come in. In normal circumstances intelligence would never reach an important conclusion on the basis of information from a unique source if that information were inconsistent with the pattern which had been established and into which it would be supposed to fit.

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10. It follows in general that hoaxes, if they are to be of any consequence, must be of large scale and long continuance.* Sporadic deceptions and falsifications of data are soon recognized by sophisticated observers because of their inconsistency with the main mass of evidence. If the Bloc desires to have a given piece of misinformation accepted by US intelligence (assuming that the misinformation is on a point of real importance) it must first fabricate considerable amounts of confirmatory evidence, [REDACTED]

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Self-deception

11. This leads us to a final aspect of deception which cannot altogether be ignored; that of self-deception, or the misinterpretation of evidence because of preconceptions, prejudices, or bias. Self-deception is a highly complex matter, most of the aspects of which can be excluded from a paper mainly concerned with deliberate Soviet deception. However, any successful hoax is likely to depend to a considerable degree on the predilection of the victim to accept certain

* An exception may be the bluff, which is usually a form of hoax designed to produce a misreading of intentions. A bluff can be quick and successful, but it requires some background to give it verisimilitude. This background may be either true or false; if it is false, the above rule holds. Another exception would be the sort of hoax described in paragraph 5 above.

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kinds of falsehood, and it must be assumed that the USSR, in any extensive operations of deception, would endeavor to take advantage of what it estimated to be the preconceptions and biases of US and allied intelligence. This is apt to be particularly true in "cover plans". It is at least theoretically possible that we may arrive at a correct description of some Soviet activity and on the basis of our own preconceptions judge it to be of the greatest intrinsic importance, although to the USSR it is important mainly because it has distracted our attention from some other activity. Suppose, for example, that the Soviet heavy bomber program had been designed primarily to distract the attention of US intelligence from the Soviet guided missile program.

12. There is more than this to self-deception. We have observed above that much data respecting the Sino-Soviet Bloc must be accepted as credible for no better reason than that it fits harmoniously into a previously established context or pattern. This context, once we have formulated it, tends naturally to become somewhat rigid, and the more elaborately it is constructed the more rigid it becomes. Thus there arises a disposition to reject new and startling information, at least provisionally, even though the information may be correct. Suppose, for example, that there occurred a pronounced weakening of the Soviet

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state, in its political, economic, or military spheres, or in all three. It is not unlikely that the evidences of such weakening would for a long time fail to be accepted by US intelligence. The USSR would derive advantage from this failure, and might find ways to encourage it.

13. The USSR might, by long-continued and skillful operations, create in US and allied intelligence organizations the preconceptions that would, at the required moment, become the basis for a successful hoax. In other words, the USSR could contribute to the construction by US intelligence of a false pattern of Soviet society by which to test new data for consistency. In this way the Soviet leaders could, at a crucial moment, perpetrate a successful deception without actually falsifying the particular evidence involved, but simply by having previously ^{that} assured [^] it would be misinterpreted. The inter-action of self-deception with Soviet hoax would be complete. In the general field of intelligence, this form of deception is almost certainly the most difficult to guard against.

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II. INHERENT SUSCEPTIBILITY OF VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE METHODS TO HOAXING

Overt Intelligence *

14. By far the greatest volume of intelligence data is procured by overt and commonplace means, from ordinary and easily accessible sources. The materials thus collected come from books, newspapers, magazines, scientific and learned journals, radio broadcasts, official declarations and published documents, speeches, photographs, reports of travellers, and so on. We may also stretch this category to include the conversations of US diplomatists and other officials with those of the Bloc, and the interrogation of defectors, returnees, and prisoners of war. The mass of such materials is enormous. It is reduced to shape and significance not only by the labor of analysts in the intelligence community but also by scholars, publicists, and others who have no official connection with intelligence work.

15. The sheer volume of these materials, together with the widely varied skills of the numerous analysts who work on them, would

* The various headings under which intelligence methods are considered in this section are adopted for convenience and for the particular purposes of this paper; they do not constitute a logical or scientific classification of intelligence processes, nor even a complete list of methods, and are not intended to do so.

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require that any important deception be a large-scale operation. Occasional falsified documents or statistics (assuming that they were falsified sufficiently to make a really significant difference in their meaning) would almost certainly be detected as such because of their inconsistency with other available materials. Moreover, any substantial falsification of figures, reports, directives, etc., which deceived US intelligence might also deceive Communist functionaries who needed to know the truth, and thus produce confusion within the Communist bureaucracy.

16. It is possible, however, for overt intelligence materials to become the vehicle for hoaxes on a grand scale. The history of the USSR is full of examples of massive distortions of fact by Soviet leaders, more often probably for domestic than for international reasons. The denigration of Stalin by Khrushchev and his colleagues constituted an admission that the entire Communist world had deliberately been deceived over a period of decades. This particular deception was not effective among non-Communist intelligence agencies. Judging with the benefit of hindsight, however, it appears that Stalin succeeded in convincing US intelligence in the years immediately before and after 1950 that the Soviet state was both more ready and more willing to

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undertake general war than was in fact the case. By contrast, the US probably believed in the later years of World War II that Stalin was more friendly to the West than in fact he was, and this mistake may in part have been owing to deliberate deception. Most of this deception (if any was intended) was accomplished through the manipulation of evidence received by the US through overt channels.

Espionage and Counter-Espionage

17. In the conduct of espionage operations it is always assumed that the enemy has the ability to discover the operations and to use them for the purpose of passing deception information. This assumption is valid also in the case of counter-espionage operations which are designed to effect contact with an enemy's secret intelligence and security services; such contact furnishes a prime channel for deception in the event that the enemy is able to detect the operations. Controlled foreign agents indeed constitute the classical method for planting deceptive material in a nation's intelligence structure.

18. The ability of an enemy to use espionage and counter-espionage channels for passing deception material is considerably limited by the

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character and level of the agent operation which is selected for such a purpose. Thus, for example, an agent who has no plausible means of acquiring information of national importance cannot be used for deception purposes. On the other hand, it is part of the art of counter-espionage to build an agent up to the point where the recipient of information is led to believe that the agent has in fact such access. This is done by slowly improving the quality of information supplied to the agent, by giving the agent plausible stories concerning his ability to acquire such information, and finally, step by step, leading the agent to the point where intelligence would be willing to accept ^{as true} a false report bearing on a matter of national significance. Obviously, there are certain cases which are ready-made for such counter-espionage activities, and here the danger to US intelligence is very great.

19. It is, of course, highly unlikely that in normal times decisions of crucial importance to US security would be based upon the reports of one agent, or even of several agents. A successful hoax through clandestine agents would normally require not merely one or two pieces of deceptive information but also a substantial amount of supporting data. In time of major crisis or difficulty, however, the danger would probably be considerably greater. A single agent's report conceivably

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might provide the last straw of evidence to determine the US decision; time might not be available to test the credibility of the report in adequate fashion. Or, deception might delay a valid intelligence judgment, or render it so tentative as to be of little use. For such a purpose, in time of crisis, deception through clandestine agents would almost certainly be particularly effective.

Liaison with Friendly Governments

20. Liaison with friendly governments, as applied to the US intelligence collection effort, is normally a formal or informal contact with the intelligence or security instruments of those governments. The liaison relationship may thus be viewed as an extension of US capability to collect intelligence or counter-intelligence information on the enemy. As such it is subject to the same vulnerabilities to deception as our own independent intelligence effort. An additional hazard is presented by the fact that the friendly government could, if it desired, use the relationship for deceptive purposes of its own, as well as indirectly at enemy instigation.

21. The Communist powers have the ability to use the US liaison relationship to their profit principally through penetrations of the

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friendly service, with resulting control of individuals or whole units of the service, as well as through counter-espionage operations directed against the collection efforts of the service. The Bloc also may be able to build deception into an established and reputable US line of information by means of covert political pressures directed against a government with those intelligence service US intelligence maintains liaison. In such an event the intelligence service's liaison with US intelligence might itself be used to conceal the government's intentions or the government's covert relationship with the Bloc. The type and magnitude of misleading information which can be passed by the liaison channel includes the entire range of intelligence and counter-intelligence information exchanged. Its effectiveness is limited only by the US evaluation of the liaison relationship including the reliability, competence, security, and effectiveness of the services and the degree of success of the enemy's penetration or control.

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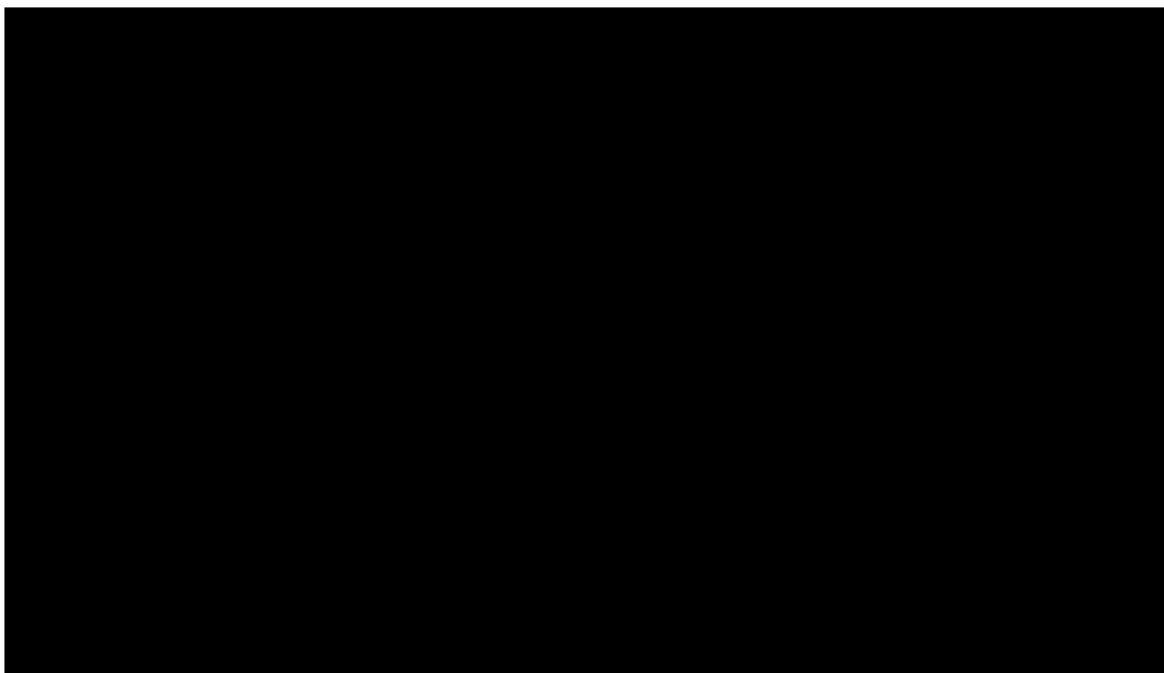
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Examination of Soviet Material Objects

25. During the past fiscal year, some 2300 objects produced within the Soviet Bloc were acquired by the US government and examined for intelligence purposes. In general, the resulting reports furnished factual data that served as a reliable and objective check on certain theoretical estimates, especially in the scientific, industrial, and economic fields. Such use was especially significant with regard to new developments, such as the introduction of synthetic rubber in

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Soviet tires for motor vehicles and aircraft, and Soviet progress in developing anti-biotics. Machine tools were analysed to shed light on worker productivity and techniques of production. Radio sets and automobiles furnished information on Soviet input practices and relative costs in terms of US dollars or man-hours of labor.

26. Although it is theoretically possible that the USSR might deceive US intelligence by making available false material objects for examination, we believe it unlikely that it would do so. As in other instances, a successful deception of proportions sufficient to be profitable would involve a very considerable operation, risk misleading Communist peoples and those of neutral countries, and probably damage the Soviet export market. The methods by which material objects are acquired for intelligence examination provide substantial insurance against the likelihood of deception through unique prototypes.

Photographs (other than aerial photography)

27. Photographs and motion picture films, as a source of intelligence information, are procured from a great many sources: commercial photographers, foreign travelers, industries and organizations with foreign contacts, liaison with friendly governments, foreign language documents

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and publications, and official Bloc releases. Such materials are generally recognized as a most concise and reliable source for intelligence information. 25X1X1

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purpose has been to withhold or disguise military information, to emphasize progress in programs of industrial expansion, or simply to confuse by adding to or subtracting from the picture. However, photographic analysis is capable, in virtually all cases, of detecting a "doctored" photograph, and we believe it extremely unlikely that any deception of substantial importance to US security could be accomplished by this means.

Aerial Photography

29. The methods of deception used against aerial photography usually consist either of (a) hiding objects or installations by means of camouflage or concealment, or (b) simulating objects, installations, or activities by means of decoys and dummies. Ample evidence exists

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30. Although Bloc control over deception measures is complete, there are still difficult problems to be solved. The USSR might find it (a) physically or economically impossible to camouflage or place underground all important installations, and (b) from a security viewpoint unwise to

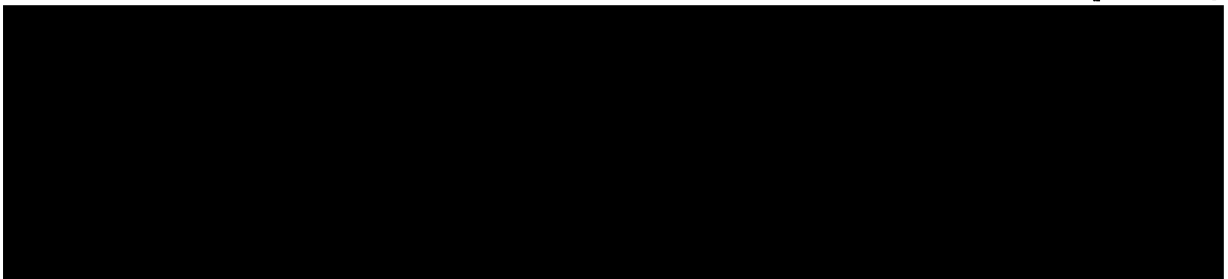
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confine its methods of camouflage or concealment to the most important installations. Moreover, during World War II nearly all the important

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31. We believe that the present ability of US photo interpreters to cope with deception methods is generally good. The problem, however, is almost certainly becoming more difficult. Even with the best aerial photography it is possible that US forces could miss the comparatively small ICBM sites, if they were protected by a deception effort of superior quality. It is probable that overflight aerial photography will require substantial technical improvement and supplementation with other kinds of instrumentation in the air, plus the highest quality of photo interpretation employing other sources and evidences from ground reconnaissance, if the ability of US intelligence to cope with deception techniques in the future is to be fully insured.

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III. THE LIKELIHOOD OF DECEPTION

36. The foregoing sections of this paper have shown that much of the evidence which we possess concerning the Sino-Soviet Bloc cannot be guaranteed to be free from deliberate distortions or falsifications introduced by the USSR. It follows that most intelligence estimates concerning the Bloc, based as they are on a complex of evidence, cannot be guaranteed to be free from the influence of deception. It does not follow that, because the influence of deception cannot be proved to be absent, it must be presumed to be present. By definition, intelligence agencies would not know if they were being hoaxed. Nevertheless, US intelligence agencies are confident that most of their estimates are not likely to be vitiated by hoax, even in those instances where the evidence is insufficient to permit a very firm judgment. The reasons for this confidence will be illustrated in the paragraphs which follow.

37. As a preliminary, it will be well to recognize that many things of the greatest importance concerning the Bloc can be established as true beyond any serious possibility of hoax. Some of these are specific facts -- e.g. that the USSR has detonated nuclear devices and could make nuclear weapons; that it has certain types of aircraft in certain minimum numbers; that it has certain types of other weapons, the description and

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capabilities of which are known by examination. These and a multitude of lesser particulars, concerning which there can be no possibility of deception, can be combined to establish various general ideas concerning the Bloc which again, as long as they are cautiously formulated and kept sufficiently general, may be considered immune from hoax. Thus the rough order of magnitude of the Soviet economy and of the Soviet armed forces, and many of the general characteristics of both, can be known beyond serious doubt. The scientific, technical, and military capabilities of the Bloc can also be established in a very general way simply by measuring the achievements which have been shown to the world. These things provide a base-point for further estimates.

38. Intelligence must press beyond incontrovertible facts and broad generalizations, however, and therefore most estimates are in the domain which cannot be guaranteed to be free from hoax. The estimates of this type fall into two broad classes: (a) virtually all concerning Soviet or Bloc intentions; and (b) virtually all of the more exact estimates of Soviet and Bloc strengths, whether military, political, economic, or otherwise. With respect to these matters, it is usually necessary to concede that hoax is possible, and to consider whether it is likely, and if so how likely.

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39. Since every estimate rests on its own particular structure of supporting evidence, no statement of the degree of likelihood of hoax will apply equally to all. Each estimate must be separately treated, and the evidence on which it is based (including collateral and confirmatory evidence) examined with the problem of deception in mind. We have carried out such an examination for US estimates on five matters of great importance: (A) Soviet heavy bomber strength; (B) Soviet nuclear weapons; (C) Some aspects of Soviet Air Defense; (D) Soviet guided missiles; and (E) Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the US. The method was as follows: As a first step, some of the evidence could be conclusively shown to be free from the possibility of hoax. The remainder was then assumed to be the product of deception, and the difficulty and cost of such deception roughly estimated. The latter estimate was then compared with another of the probable advantage which the USSR would gain from the deception; frequently by this process a convincing judgment of the likelihood of deception could be reached. If it could not, other lines of argument could sometimes lead to such a judgment, though occasionally no conclusion was possible. The results of the investigation are very

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briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.*

40. By way of caution, it is desirable to recall the distinction between concealment and hoax which was made earlier in this paper, and to emphasize again that we are dealing only with the problem of hoax. The validity and adequacy of an estimate depends not only on whether the evidence on which it rests is hoax-free, but also on whether the evidence is sufficient. With the latter question we are not, in this paper, concerned. Consequently, the judgments which follow do not establish the degree of validity or adequacy of the estimates examined. It is true that if certain evidence is deemed likely to be vitiated by deception, the reliability of the estimate resting on that evidence is diminished. It is not true that an estimate resting on evidence free from hoax is therefore a valid and satisfactory estimate, for the evidence may be insufficient to make it so.

* A somewhat more detailed account of the examination of the first four topics will be found in Annexes B, C, D, and E (limited distribution). It should be observed that each of these topics is itself quite general in nature, and that the estimates concerning them break down into a large number of subsidiary estimates, many of which must separately be examined for susceptibility to hoax. We have conducted such an examination to the extent that appeared necessary to establish the validity of our judgment on the main problem. Even in the Annexes, however, we can present only a comparatively small number of these subsidiary investigations.

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A. Soviet Heavy Bomber Strength*

41. It can be established, beyond possibility of hoax, that the USSR on 26 April 1956 had a minimum of 22 BISON and 12 BEAR aircraft; this number were seen in the air together by competent observers. The essential performance characteristics of these aircraft can also be established, though within certain narrow margins of error. It can also be proved that the USSR has the capability of producing substantially more than this number of these aircraft. Beyond these facts, however, our estimate enters the area in which hoax is possible. Moreover, the deceptions which might have been practiced by the USSR in order to lead us to the estimate which we have in fact made are not so costly or so difficult as to be ruled out on these grounds, in view of the intrinsic importance of the matter of heavy bombers.

42. We have estimated that as of 1 October 1956 the USSR had approximately 40 BISON and 35 BEAR aircraft. That this is an overestimate produced by Soviet deception may be considered unlikely, primarily because the USSR has failed to use certain methods which it could easily have

* For the current estimate on this problem see NIE 11-7-56: Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attack on the Continental US in Mid-1960, Section II.

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employed to produce an even greater overestimate. On the contrary, recent evidence we have acquired has been such as to make us reduce our previous figures, and much of this evidence could without difficulty have been withheld or altered by the USSR.

43. It may be, on the other hand, that the USSR has substantially larger numbers of heavy bombers than we believe, and has attempted to hoax us into an underestimate. According to this hypothesis, the USSR would have presented us with the evidence we possess, being careful to make it sufficiently consistent and persuasive to lead us to the estimate we have made, while successfully concealing evidence of the existence of additional aircraft. The element of concealment would be the essence of this operation; the hoax would be easy of accomplishment but comparatively unimportant.

44. Our estimate of future Soviet strength in BISON and BEAR aircraft is inevitably based somewhat more on deduction and argument, and less on tangible evidence, than our estimate of current strength. It is accordingly less firm. We have no direct knowledge of Soviet plans for future build-up, and even if we had, the plans might change. The intelligence community, in submitting the estimate, explicitly recognized that various factors might operate to render it invalid, especially with respect to a period four or five years distant (see NIE 11-4-56, para. 115). It appears

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to be true in this case (though it is not necessarily true as a general rule) that the estimate of future developments is more susceptible to the influence of deception than that of the current situation.

45. Our projection of future build-up takes as its starting-point our estimate of current strength and our knowledge of Soviet aircraft production capability. To the extent that the former may be an under-estimate, the rate of future build-up may also be underestimated. In this case the same considerations would hold, both now and in future years, as are discussed in paragraph 43 above; i.e. the element of hoax, as compared with that of concealment, is unimportant.

46. If on the other hand the USSR wishes us to believe that a substantial build-up is to take place during coming years although in fact no such build-up is contemplated, the deception as of the present day would be very easy. Our projection of this build-up is founded on a few bits of evidence which could be fabricated with no difficulty, on a knowledge of Soviet capabilities which we believe to be virtually hoax-free, and especially on our own analysis of probable Soviet goals and requirements. With respect to this last we could be deceiving ourselves. As time goes on, however, we should expect to discover evidence of the growing numbers of heavy bombers. Fabrication of this evidence would become increasingly

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difficult as the proportion of notional aircraft grew, and there would always be danger of an accidental breach in the veil of security. Nevertheless, we believe it possible that the deception could be carried on for two or three years without serious danger of discovery.

47. It thus becomes plain that a Soviet hoax leading us to an overestimate of future Soviet build-up in BISON and BEAR aircraft would be the easiest to achieve of any significant hoax connected with the heavy bomber situation.

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The estimate rests more upon general understanding of Soviet methods and objectives, and of the nature of current and future weapons systems, than upon the meager amount of specific evidence which is available. Thus, in the last analysis, our judgment that hoax is unlikely in this particular is valid only so far as our general understanding of the conduct and motivations of the Soviet leaders is valid. The possibility of self-deception, to which the USSR may have deliberately contributed, cannot be ruled out.

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B. Soviet Nuclear Weapons*

48. We consider that the most important facts about the Soviet nuclear weapons program are established beyond possibility of hoax. These facts are (a) that the USSR has set off at least 27 nuclear explosions, and (b) that the USSR has scientists and technicians capable of developing and manufacturing advanced types of nuclear weapons.

49. The number of nuclear weapons which the USSR could have depends primarily upon the amount of fissionable material which the USSR has produced. Our estimate on this point could be vitiated by deliberate Soviet deception. However, the operation of deception necessary to lead us to an overestimate of Soviet fissionable materials production would be virtually as difficult and expensive as actual production of fissionable material. We can see no advantage to the USSR in such a deception, and we therefore reject it as highly unlikely. The operations of deception leading us to an underestimate of Soviet fissionable materials production would not be difficult, but they would be pointless without a far larger effort directed toward concealment of the additional production of fissionable material.

* See NIE 11-2-56: The Soviet Atomic Energy Program, (limited distribution).

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Such concealment is possible, and may become considerably easier in coming years.

50. With respect to the types of nuclear weapons which the USSR has, available evidence is sufficient for only the most general estimate. Something can be learned of the types of weapons tested by the USSR, and our estimate is based upon an assumption that the USSR will stockpile the types of weapons which it tests. It is possible that the USSR might test certain types of weapons in considerable numbers, without intending to stockpile them, and primarily for the purpose of distracting our attention away from the types of weapons (whether tested or untested) which it proposed in fact to put into stockpile. We believe that the chances of such a deception are slight, primarily because we can see no advantage in it sufficient to offset the disadvantages of wasting fissionable material in unnecessary tests, and of failing adequately to test weapons intended for the stockpile.

51. Our estimate of future Soviet strengths in nuclear weapons is based upon an extrapolation of present trends, and upon our assumption that the USSR will continue to devote time and effort to the development and production of these weapons. To the extent that our estimate of current trends is vitiated by deliberate deception, our estimate of future

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strengths is correspondingly damaged. It is also possible that we may be deliberately hoaxed into the assumption that the USSR intends to proceed with the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons; in some future time we might be hoaxed into a contrary belief. Our confidence in this aspect of our estimate depends upon our confidence in our estimate of the whole attitude, policy, and intent of the Soviet leadership.

C. Some Aspects of Soviet Air Defense*

52. We consider that our knowledge of the types of fighter aircraft available to the USSR is established beyond serious possibility of hoax. With respect to the numbers of these aircraft, our estimate is based upon evidence which could at least in part be the product of deliberate falsification. Although the numbers involved are much larger than those of heavy bombers, the same general propositions concerning the likelihood of hoax apply (see paragraphs 42-47 above). The performance characteristics of these aircraft are known beyond serious possibility of hoax save in one important respect: their electronic equipment. Even in this particular, the capabilities of the Soviet equipment are known; what cannot be

* See NIE 11-4-56: Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action; also NIE 11-5-55: Air Defense of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

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established is how many fighter aircraft in fact have this equipment. It is possible that the USSR has deliberately led us into the belief that more aircraft are thus equipped than is in fact the case. We think this unlikely, however, primarily because we see no good reason why the USSR should refrain from putting on its fighter aircraft the best electronic equipment it has available.

53. We estimate that the USSR now has a ground-to-air missile capability as part of its air defense system. The direct evidence of this capability is such, however, that we cannot prove that it is not a hoax. The cost of such a hoax would not be sufficient to rule it out, in view of the importance of the question of air defense. We believe hoax unlikely, however, because (a) we know that the USSR has the scientific and technical capability to produce surface-to-air missiles, sooner or later; (b) we presume that the USSR has a military requirement for such missiles; (c) it is reasonable (though not necessary) to believe from other evidence that the USSR would have produced a surface-to-air missile by this time; and (d) the magnitude of the construction operations at what we estimate to be guided missile sites around Moscow is somewhat greater and more costly than would appear to be required for mere hoax, and, where it can be examined at all, is clearly adequate for genuine missile operations.

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54. Even if there be no hoax as to the main point of Soviet surface-to-air missile capability, it remains possible that the direct evidence we possess may have been fabricated by the USSR to give an exaggerated impression of current capabilities. The sites around Moscow may be more numerous and elaborate than is actually justified by the missiles presently available for use at them, even though they may be genuine sites for guided missile operation. This deception would be easy and profitable. We have no basis on which to judge whether it is likely.

55. Concerning the Soviet aircraft control and warning system, we consider that it would be at least as difficult to fabricate the evidence we possess as to construct and operate a genuine system. Consequently we consider major deception virtually out of the question. The evidence is not complete, however, and we may have deceived ourselves by enlarging somewhat the extent and scope of the system which we have attributed to the USSR.

D. Soviet Guided Missiles*

56. The existence of a vigorous Soviet program of research and development in guided missiles can be established beyond any serious

* See NIE 11-5-56: Soviet Guided Missile Capabilities and Probable Programs.

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likelihood of hoax, though not, perhaps, beyond all possibility of it. Likewise, the fact that Soviet scientists and technicians are capable of developing advanced types of guided missiles is, we believe, not subject to doubt.

57. Concerning the types and numbers of missiles which the USSR may now possess, and the precise stage of development of those which are not yet ready for production or operational use, the evidence available is exceedingly scanty. Such as it is, we consider that it is in itself virtually immune from hoax. It is far from sufficient, however, and we still have to base our estimate of Soviet guided missile capabilities, both present and future, very largely upon the analogy of US experience. The estimate made in this way can be checked and corrected at a few points by the direct evidence which has recently become available. The influence of hoax on our estimate is, up to this point, negligible by comparison with the influence of concealment.

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We

believe that the USSR knows that we are obtaining this evidence, and knows

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how we are doing so. It is therefore possible that the USSR may be deliberately permitting us to obtain this data -- itself perfectly genuine -- while successfully concealing more advanced testing operations at some other range far within its boundaries. The object of the hoax would be to create the illusion that we were in fact gaining a true insight into Soviet missile development. It would thus be a type of "cover plan."

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59. Since the evidence which we possess [REDACTED] indicates a degree of Soviet progress in missile development broadly consistent with the estimate from US analogy, we may argue that significantly more advanced work at another testing range is unlikely. This is persuasive, but is precisely the kind of argument which makes many major hoaxes possible. In arriving at an estimate of Soviet guided missile development, we have to accept this argument or refrain from any estimate at all. For the present paper, however, it is safer to conclude that no judgment concerning the likelihood of hoax in this particular is possible. The intelligence community, in submitting its estimate of Soviet guided missiles, does so with many reservations, most of which arise not because of the likelihood of hoax but because of the insufficiency of direct evidence available.

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E. Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the US*

60. Preceding examples have been primarily drawn from estimates of Soviet strengths; they have involved Soviet intentions only in connection with plans for future build-ups. In the present example, however, we are concerned primarily with an estimate of Soviet intentions, an area in which hoax is particularly easy. Barring some unexpected intelligence break-through, we are highly unlikely to have direct knowledge of the plans of Soviet leaders. Therefore, a judgment of their intent to attack must be based (a) upon an estimate of Soviet capabilities for such attack, and (b) upon a correct interpretation of the political, psychological, and military moves which the Soviet leaders make leading directly to the attack. In this discussion we shall assume that the USSR possess the general capability to attack, and confine ourselves to the second problem.

61. Two conditions are possible: (a) that the Soviet leaders do not intend to attack the US, but desire to persuade us that they do so intend; and (b) that the Soviet leaders intend to attack the US, but desire to persuade us that they will not do so. The first would obviously be the

* i.e. Warning in advance of that furnished by early-warning radar. See NIE 11-3-57: Probable Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the Continental US.

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easiest of hoaxes to execute. It would require, for example, no more than the dispatch of a substantial formation of heavy bombers toward the US under such conditions that US intelligence would gain knowledge of the movement. Such a hoax would be unlikely under most foreseeable conditions, since its effect would presumably be to set off a retaliatory attack which might not be averted in time.

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